

Message Text

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TAGS PFOR TW CH

SUBJECT: ROC PRESS REACTION TO THE DEATH OF CHOU EN-LAI

1. ALL JANUARY 9 MAJOR MORNING NEWSPAPERS DELAYED PRESS RUNS TO FRONT PAGE AN AP DISPATCH DATED TOKYO JANUARY 9 REPORTING THE DEATH OF CHOU EN-LAI. THE DISPATCH WAS CARRIED IN A RELATIVELY STRAIGHT-FORWARD MANNER, BUT A JANUARY 10 CNA BIOGRAPHY OF CHOU REFLECTED THE GROC'S VIEW OF HIS ROLE IN MAINLAND POLITICS AND CHARACTERISES HIM AS "TOADYING" TO LIN PIAO AND "CURRYING THE FAVOR" OF CHIANG CHING.

2. CHOU'S DEATH WAS ALSO THE SUBJECT OF SEVERAL EDITORIALS AND SPECIAL ARTICLES ON JANUARY 9-10. REPORTEDLY, THERE WAS GENERAL AGREEMENT AMONG "LOCAL EXPERTS ON CHINESE COMMUNIST AFFAIRS" THAT CHOU'S DEATH WAS UNLIKELY TO PRODUCE GREAT IMPACT ON THE PRC'S SUCCESSION PROBLEM OR ITS FOREIGN POLICY BUT THAT HIS DEATH MAY PRESENT MAO TSE-TUNG WITH MANY PROBLEMS.

3. FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS HAN LI-WU (2635/4539/2976) WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT CHOU'S DEATH "WILL HAVE ONLY LIMITED IMPACT ON THE REGIME'S SUCCESSION PROBLEM." NOTING THAT CHOU COULD HAVE

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ACTED AS A "TRANSITION LINK" BETWEEN THE OLD AND THE NEW LEADERSHIP IF HE SURVIVED MAO, HAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT

"NOW MAO WILL HAE TO ASSUME THE BURDEN OF THE SUCCESSION PROBLEM PERSONALLY. THAT WOULD COMPLICATE THE SITUATION." ALTHOUGH HAN REPORTEDLY DOES NOT EXPECT ANY CHANGE IN PRC FOREIGN POLICY IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE OR ANY SPECTACULAR DEVELOPMENT IN US/PRC RELATIONS TIS YEAR, HE NOTED THAT THE LOSS OF CHOU'S EXPERIENCE WOULD BE FELT MORE ACUTELY IN THE AREA OF PRC FOREIGN POLICY SINCE TENG HSIAO-PING IS "LESS EXPERIENCED AND LESS CAPABLE OF TAKING INITIATIVES" AND THE TENG-KISSINGER RELATIONSHIP "IS FAR FROM CORDIAL."

5. ANOTHER UNIDENTIFIED "EXPERT" REPORTEDLY TOLD CNA THAT CHOU'S DEATH WILL PROBABLY AFFECT THE US/PRC NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND SECRETARY KISSINGER'S PRESTIGE SINCE CHOU'S DIPLOMATIC TRICKS DELUDED MANY FOREIGNERS AND HIS RELATIONS WITH KISSINGER WERE UNIQUE.

6. MND SPOKESMAN GNERAL LI CHANG-HAO (2621/7022/3185) WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT WHILE THERE WILL BE NO CHANGE IN THE NATURE OF THE PRC REGIME, THE DEATH OF CHOU WILL AGGRAVATE INTERNAL CHAOS AND MAO WILL SOON APPEAL FOR STABILITY AND UNITY. AND "LOCAL EXPERT" LEGISLATOR LI TIEN-MIN (2621/1131/3046) REPORTEDLY SAID THAT CHOU'S DEATH DOES NOT REPRESENT A CHANGE IN PRC POLICY SINCE CHOU WAS NOT A POLICY-MAKER BUT A POLICY -EXECUTIONER. "CHOU HAD NO PEER WITHIN THE CHINESE COMMUNIST HIERARCHY AS A NIMBLE FOREIGN POLICY EXECUTIVE. HE HAD CERTAIN PERSONAL CHARMS THAT MANY PEOPLE HAD FOUND IRRESISTIBLE."

7. EDITORIAL COMMENT IN GNERAL FOLLOWED THE VIEWS OF "LOCAL EXPERTS" QUOTED ABOVE.

8. COMMENT: ROC OFFICIALS HAVE NOT VOLUNTEERED TO EMBOFFS ANY COMMENT ON CHOU'S PASSING. AS CASUAL OPPORTUNITIES HAVE ARISEN AT SOCIAL FUNCTIONS CHARGE HAS ATTEMPTED TO ELICIT VIEWS OF SEVERAL SENIOR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS, ALTHOUGH ALL PROFESSED TO BELIEVE THAT CHOU'S DEPARTURE FROM THE SCENE WILL HAVE NO IMMEDIATE IMPACE ON PRC POLICY. GEORGE YEH, MINISTER W/O PORTFOLIO, SIMPLY COMMENTED THAT "TENG LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HSIAO-PING'S EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION MAY BE HELPED OR HARMED-- IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL." MINISTER CHOU SHU-K'AI THOUGHT THAT CHOU'S LONG ILLNESS HAD GIVEN CHICOMS PLENTY OF TIME TO PREPARE FOR HIS PASSING AND EXPECTED NO IMPORTANT MODIFICATIONS IN PRC FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC POLICIES. GENERAL LAI MING-T'ANG POINTED OUT THAT "WANG HUNG-WEN IS NOW NO.2 IN CHICOM PARTY AND WOULD HAVE TO BE WATCHED MORE CLOSELY NOW THAT CHOU IS GONE" (LAI PLACES WANG IN RADICAL CAMP, SERVING INTERESTS OF CHIANG CHING AS OPPOSED TO THOSE OF "MODERATE" CHOU EN-LAI).

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